

COSSATOT RIVER STATE PARK- NATURAL AREA (CRSPNA)

The wild and scenic Cossatot River is a corridor of life forged from the geologic journey of the Ouachita Mountains.

The park, managed jointly by Arkansas State Parks and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, includes 12.5 miles of one of the most rugged and spectacular river corridors in the central United States. With over 5,483 acres of wooded slopes, outstanding geological features, cascading clear water, and Class III, IV, and even Class V rapids, the Cossatot is a favorite with hikers and skilled canoeists, rafters, and kayakers.

The combination of natural vegetation, rugged topography, exposed rock formations, and sparkling water creates a scenic extravaganza.

Through vision, persistence, opportunity, and cooperation, this unique river corridor is protected forever. The mission of CRSPNA is to maintain the natural and scenic quality of the Cossatot River corridor and provide natural resource education opportunities. Park interpreters are on staff year round to provide programs for our visitors and curriculum-based education experiences for school groups.

The leopard darter and the Ouachita Mountain shiner, indigenous species found only in the southern Ouachitas, live in the river. Waterfall's sedge and Ouachita Mountain twistflower, indigenous species found only in a few counties in the Ouachita Mountains, and a number of other sensitive species thrive within the park's five natural communities.

LOCATION

The park extends from the Ouachita National Forest, near the Highway 246 bridge on the north, to the Corps of Engineer property on Gillham Lake, south of U.S. 278 (formerly Hwy 4). The area is most accessible at the two highway bridges and at Cossatot Falls. Good views and river access are available via a network of roads (see map), two of which cross the river.

The CRSPNA may be reached by traveling U.S. 278 west from Umpire about 9 miles, or 9 miles east from Highway 71 at Wickes. Highway 246 passes through the northern portion of the park-natural area between Athens and Vandervoort. Both highways are paved.

Weyerhaeuser roads #52200, #52000 and a portion of road #52600 are designated routes to the interior of the property. Signs are in place to guide visitors to interior river access points. These gravel roads are also used for forest management including timber hauling. Use caution when traveling these roads.

SPECIAL SAFETY REGULATIONS

The French origin of Cossatot means "skull crusher." The river can be dangerous! River levels can change quickly. Review water levels, know your ability, and use care and common sense. A floater brochure is available. Floatable water levels are dependent on rain events. No floater services are provided.

Floating the Cossatot is not recommended for the inexperienced or the ill-equipped. Heed these regulations for your safety and so others may enjoy this special area after you. Note: Good water levels for floating are generally limited to winter and spring.

- ◆ Life vests are mandatory for paddlers and other floaters. Helmets are highly recommended.
- ◆ Pack out what you pack in. Each visitor is responsible for his own refuse. Littering is strictly prohibited.
- ◆ Glass containers are not allowed on or along the river.
- ◆ It is unlawful to collect, deface, or destroy any plants, wildlife, or public property. The park is a wildlife sanctuary. Hunting is prohibited.
- ◆ Parking on bridges is prohibited. Bridges and roads are used for forest management including timber hauling.
- ◆ ATVs may be used on roads only. No off-road travel.

WARNING: Never attempt to drive across a low water bridge during periods of high water.

FACILITIES

On-Site Facilities ◆ A 16,000-square-foot visitor center includes a wildlife observation room, an exhibit gallery featuring life above and below the water, two meeting rooms, and a hands-on laboratory. The center gift shop features Arkansas and Cossatot River gifts. This facility was funded through the Amendment 75, 1/8-cent conservation tax. Primitive camping is available at the Cossatot Falls, U.S. 278, Eds Banks, and Sandbar Areas. A group camping area is available at the River Ridge Group Camping Area by reservation only. Please contact the park for more details.

Trails ◆ The park has four trails. The **River Corridor Trail** begins at Highway 246 and traverses 12.5 miles of the river corridor to the Highway 278 access. It connects four of the five river access areas. The **Harris Creek Trail** begins just off of Highway 278 near the Baker Creek bridge and meanders through 3.5 miles of mature forest

between Harris Creek and the river. The **Waterleaf Interpretive Trail** begins at the visitor center and includes a section of barrier-free trail along the ridge top. This .5-mile trail goes down the north slope to the Highway 278 river access. **Brushy Creek Interpretive Trail** starts on the west side of the river and provides barrier-free access to a pedestrian walkway over the river. The trail continues to the picnic area on the east side of this recreation area.

Nearby Facilities ◆ South of the area are U.S. Army Corps of Engineers recreation areas on Gillham Lake. To the north are U.S. Forest Service campgrounds and day-use at Shady Lake, Bard Springs, and Albert Pike Recreation Areas. Daisy State Park to the east provides camping on Lake Greeson, and Queen Wilhelmina State Park west of Mena offers both camping and a modern lodge on the second highest peak in the state. Several privately-owned lodging facilities are also nearby.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Purchase of the Cossatot River corridor was made possible by a grant from the Arkansas Natural and Cultural Resources Council. The Arkansas Nature Conservancy played a key role in the acquisition of the area.

The Cossatot River and the Natural Area surrounding it have been recognized nationally, and in 1992 Congress designated it a National Wild and Scenic River.

For information on park hours or programs, contact:

Cossatot River State Park-Natural Area

1980 Highway 278 West

Wickes, AR 71973

Telephone: (870) 385-2201

River Stage: (870) 387-3141

CossatotRiver@Arkansas.com

For further information on Arkansas's other fine state parks and natural areas contact:

Arkansas State Parks
One Capitol Mall
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 682-1191
ArkansasStateParks.com



Natural Heritage Commission
1100 North Street
Little Rock, AR 72201
(501) 324-9150



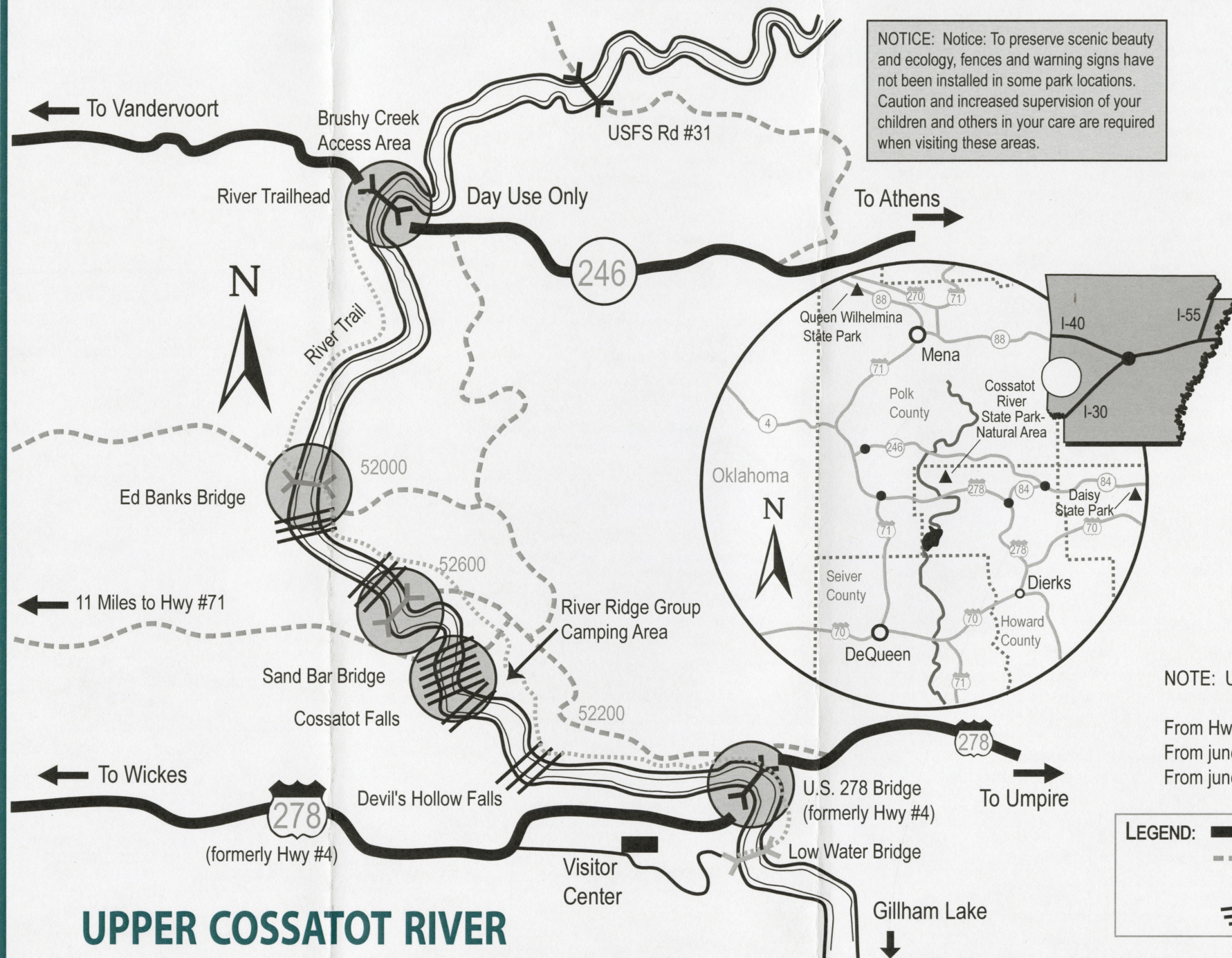
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Arkansas State Parks 2023

COSSATOT RIVER STATE PARK- NATURAL AREA



ARKANSAS DEPARTMENT OF
PARKS, HERITAGE, AND TOURISM



NOTICE: Notice: To preserve scenic beauty and ecology, fences and warning signs have not been installed in some park locations. Caution and increased supervision of your children and others in your care are required when visiting these areas.

Floaters Note:
The Cossatot is not for beginners!

- ▲ Cossatot floating opportunities are seasonal usually early spring and winter. Water levels are normally too low for paddling during the summer and early fall.
- ▲ Paddlers should **never** attempt this river alone or without proper equipment.
- ▲ Be particularly careful on and around low water bridges. The hydraulics associated with these structures may suck people and inflatables into the bridge tubes.

River Information:

- It is:
- ▲ a 9.5-mile float from Hwy 246 to the take out at U.S. 278 (formerly Hwy 4)
 - ▲ a 6-mile float from the Ed Banks low water bridge to the take out at U.S. 278
 - ▲ a 4.5-mile float from the Sandbar low water bridge to the take out at U.S. 278

River level information is available by calling 870-387-3141. This recording gives the river level in feet elevation at the Highway 246 bridge.

NOTE: Unpaved roads are numbered by Weyerhaeuser Co.

From Hwy 278 to junction 52200/52600 is 3.5 miles
From junction 52200/52600 to Cossatot Falls is 1.8 miles
From junction 52200/52600 to Sand Bar Bridge is 2.5 miles

LEGEND:

- Paved Road
- Unpaved Road
- River Access Points
- White Water (at Floatable Levels)

UPPER COSSATOT RIVER